A

REVIEW

OF THE

STRICTURES

ON THE

DECLARATION

OF THE

CATHOLIC SOCIETY.

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A

REVIEW, &c.

A PAMPHLET, entitled, "The Declaration of the Catholic Society," was ſome time ago publiſhed; firſt without a ſignature, and afterward with the name of THEO. M'KENNA ſubſcribed to it.

This pamphlet, from its own merit, and the novelty of the inſtitution whence it came, acquired ſome degree of popularity. The monopoliſts of power took alarm; and an anſwer to it, under the title of "Strictures on the Declaration," was ſent into the world.

In the firſt page of thoſe Strictures, the Author thinks it proper to give a ſpecimen of the plan

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which he intends to purſue; firſt, to miſrepreſent facts; and next, to draw ſuch concluſions from them as may beſt anſwer his purpoſe.—The Declaration, he ſays, was firſt publiſhed with the name of THEO. M'KENNA, and afterward without it, but the fact happens to ſtand as I have ſtated it above.

I ſhould not have taken notice of this unimportant circumſtance of miſrepreſentation, if it did not ſerve to ſhew how little candour is to be expected in the courſe of a work, which departs from truth ſo early, in order to indulge in ſcurrility.

But a man of abilities who pleads for an oppreſſed people, and a ſociety, which does itſelf honour, by adopting the ſentiments and opinions of ſuch a man, are to expect no mercy from thoſe, who are baſe enough to defend injuſtice for a bribe, and who found their rights on the wrongs, and miſeries of others.——The Author of the Declaration has no reaſon, however, to be diſcouraged. While he continues to employ his pen in the ſervice of his country and his friends, he will have the approbation of the wiſe and the good; and it will be impoſ-

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ſible for a mercenary ſcribe to write him out of reputation.

It is ſomewhat ſingular that a writer, who thinks it proper to conceal his own name, ſhould reproach others for their obſcurity, and ſhould try the weight of argument by the weight of name. It is probable that the concealment of his name will take nothing from the ſtrength of his argument; but if the authority of a name is to decide the merit of compoſition, I ſhould be glad to know what place we are to aſſign to a man, who chooſes to be nameleſs.

But inconſiſtencies are ſometimes excuſable, and ſome allowances are due to a man, who has, perhaps, ſome other object in view, beſides the communication of knowledge; who writes in haſte, to ſatisfy the calls of hunger; and whoſe heart, perhaps, diſavows what his hand is obliged to perform.

The firſt appearance of the Author of the Strictures, is in the character of Hypocriſy. Aſſuming the garb and the language of Friendſhip, he comes forward, not ſo much to anſwer the Author of the Declaration, as to reſcue the

Catholics from the calumnies, which this man would fix on them.

The Catholics will not go into the camp of an enemy to look for aſſiſtance. They will not put the title-deeds of their eſtates into the hands of an informer. *Timeo Danaos et dona ferentes.*

" The whole of the Declaration," ſays the Author of the Strictures, " is an high-coloured and inflamed deſcription of conſtructive grievances." There are objects in nature, which require no colouring to make them impreſſive: and ſuch is the condition of the Roman Catholics of this country, that the moſt temperate argument addreſſed to the underſtanding in their favour, makes a ſecret appeal to the paſſions. The Author of the Declaration owes more to his ſubject, than to his art; nor is it extraordinary that his deſcription of grievances ſhould appear inflammatory, if the grievances themſelves be ſuch as to irritate and to inflame. But it is unhappily too common for us to reſerve our ſighs and ſorrows, for ſcenes of painted and Theatrical diſtreſs, and to fortify our feelings againſt the miſeries of real life.——This is the reaſon of our aſtoniſhment, when the hand of a maſter

maſter preſents to our imagination, thoſe circumſtances of woe, which our hearts forgot to combine; and this is the reaſon why nothing appears glowing but a picture, nothing pathetic but a deſcription.

The Author of the Strictures next proceeds to offer us conſolation. The condition of a priſoner is little improved by the lectures of his gaoler on patience. But what kind of conſolation does he offer? Plainly this, that we ought to be ſatisfied with our ſituation, becauſe our calamities are not equal to thoſe which preſent themſelves in Turkey. He ſeems to forget, that Happineſs is a relative ſtate, and that Poverty is more ſeverely felt, when it reſides in the neighbourhood of Opulence and Power.

I allow that we live in a country which is poſſeſſed of a free conſtitution; but have we any ſhare in the freedom of that conſtitution? Have we any part in the repreſentation of our country? Have we any controul over the repreſentatives of the nation? Are we allowed a vote in the expenditure of the money which we pay with ſo liberal a hand? We revere that noble bulwark of liberty, the Trial by Jury, but may we not be expoſed to ſome of its inconveniencies,

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by being excluded from Grand-juries, Sheriff-ſhips, and Under-ſheriff-ſhips?

The Author of the Strictures ſends us, indeed, to the preſs, and to the plough; gives us the benefit of complaint, without the benefit of redreſs, and tells us that we may ſow; but what ſecurity does he give, that we ſhall reap the harveſt? "The Proteſtant part of the community," ſays he, "are enabled to enjoy their poſſeſſions without diſturbance, becauſe they have excluſively the power of the ſtate;" whence it evidently follows, that the Catholics, having no ſhare in that power, have little or no ſecurity for the profits of their induſtry, or the properties they inherit from their families.

Can any language be leſs intimidating than the following? "It is not for the Catholics, "armed as their cauſe is with reaſon and juſ-"tice, like public foes, to ſeek advantage from "public calamity; they ought to advance their "claims at a time moſt favourable for diſcuſ-"ſion; when the condition of the empire is "flouriſhing and tranquil; they might ſeem "culpable to their country, if they reſerved "their pretenſions to augment the perplexities "of ſome critical emergency. Yet theſe inde-

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" cent alluſions," ſays the Author of the Strictures, " vex me to the ſoul." Is it indecent to allude to the flouriſhing ſtate of the empire? Is it ungenerous not to augment the perplexities of ſome critical emergency? And is it rebellion on the part of the Catholics to advance their claims at a time, when religious animoſity is much ſoftened, and when the reaſons alledged for keeping them in bondage, no longer exiſt? I fear there are ſome people about the Caſtle, who are not half ſo good ſubjects as the Catholics, or the Author of the Declaration, who are not ſatisfied with the emoluments of a penſion, or a place, and whoſe appetites are equal to the riches of the Treaſury.

The following ſentence is ſingular for its logic; " They muſt neceſſarily acknowledge a Supreme " Power *without* the ſtate, which nominally con- " fined to ſpirituals, acts eſſentially, and of courſe " in temporal caſes." If this power acts eſſentially in one caſe, does it follow that it acts eſſentially in another caſe which is totally different? with as good reaſon might I ſay, that pain and pleaſure, as they belong eſſentially to the mind, belong alſo eſſentially to the body.

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The power of the Author of the Strictures ſeems to be more than Papal; he arranges, alters, or diſmiſſes the eſſences of things, with as much facility, and as little ceremony as his Holineſs of Rome gives orders for changing the form or the type of a prayer-book.

But what reaſon does there exiſt for this dread of a power without the ſtate? Is the Pope ſtill ſo formidable? Alas! without indulging in dreams of dominion, he finds it difficult enough to preſerve the little he has been able to ſave from the wreck of his former Titles and Prerogatives.—Does not this power exiſt in many countries on the continent? And has it been found to interfere with the duty of the ſubject? Did Louis the XIV. or Louis XV. require a Bull from the Pope to regiſter their edicts? The uſe which has been made of the argument, is a proof of its weakneſs. Sometimes Papal power is deſcribed as an inſtrument, in the hand of kings, for reducing their ſubjects to ſlavery; and ſometimes as a ſignal for the rebellion of ſubjects, and the humiliation of Monarchs.

It muſt be confeſſed, that in the dark ages, the pretenſions of the court of Rome were of a very lofty nature: but theſe pretenſions have been long

long ſince relinquiſhed, and a revival of them is as little to be apprehended, as the revival of the Brehon laws in Ireland, or the Feudal ſyſtem in England.

From this view of the matter, it may be inferred that Catholic eſtabliſhments, whether the ſeat of power be in Rome, or in Japan, are like other religious eſtabliſhments, harmleſs when confined to ſpirituals, and dangerous only when allowed to mingle too much with the temporal concerns of men.

At length we are arrived at the three *great* premiſes, on which the Author of the Declaration *is ſaid* to reſt his concluſion, the three *great* pillars, on which, the definitive reſolution of his ſociety *is ſaid* to be centered and ſupported.

I think the Author of the Strictures might have been more ſucceſsful, if he had been more artful; he might have choſen a better time and a better place for miſrepreſentation; he might have interwoven it with the body of his narrative, where the mixture of ſome truth might have covered a great deal of falſehood; but to preſent, in a detached paragraph, the fanciful inventions of his own brain, as the deliberate productions of

others, is too groſs an impoſture to remain undiſcovered.

By a candid introduction of this kind, are we prepared for the following reſolution of the Catholic Society: "That they will to the utmoſt "of their power endeavour, by all legal and "conſtitutional means, to procure the repeal of "the laws, by which they are aggrieved as Ro-"man Catholics; that they will promote re-"peated applications, to every branch of the "legiſlature, for that purpoſe, and aſſiſt ſuch "applications by all means of legal influence, "which it ſhall, at any time, be poſſible for them "to exert."

This reſolution is to have dreadful conſequences. It aims at no leſs than the ſubverſion of the Proteſtant church. Formerly Popery and the downfall of the Proteſtant church were terms conſtantly linked together. Of this union political views were the cauſe, and piety was made the pretext. This hypocritical fervour had its effect. In the boſom of this country, an inquiſition was raiſed, armed with more vengeance than the tribunals of Spaniſh perſecution, and a code of laws, written in blood, was enacted againſt men, who thought themſelves bound to worſhip God

God according to their conſciences, and not according to act of parliament.

I do not wiſh to revive the memory of paſt times; I ſhould rather look forward with hope, than backward with horror; but if the arſenals of bigotry are to be again opened, it is neceſſary to defend the public mind from contagion.

Meaſures of ſecurity are perhaps needleſs. The preſent generation will not relapſe into the errors of their forefathers. This is not the age of cruſades. The Roman Catholics wiſh well to their clergy, but they do not wiſh to ſee them either in courts, or parliaments; they do not deſire to raiſe them above the level of their duty; they wiſh to ſee them in their proper places, in their churches, exemplifying by their lives the precepts they inculcate; and teaching other men, by the ſalutary reſtraints, which they impoſe on themſelves, to mend their morals, and to moderate their paſſions.

Whether eccleſiaſtical inſtitutions, interwoven with the ſtate, be uſeful to religion, or the welfare of a people, I am not diſpoſed to inquire; but their utility being admitted, I ſee no reaſon for denying a preference to the Proteſtant eſta-

bliſhment in this country. It ſtands midway between the different ſects, and coaleſces more naturally, perhaps, than any other, with the extremes. For the ſame reaſon that men enter into ſocial, to avoid the inconveniencies of ſavage life, it is good ſenſe, and good policy to ſubmit to ſome political hardſhips, in order to ſecure a return of greater political benefits.

The connection of Ireland with England is a ſource of much advantage to both countries. The Proteſtant eſtabliſhment is one of the principal links in the chain of connection, and deſerves therefore to be maintained; and the Catholics, I know, are ready to ſacrifice their claims on this point, and to ſurrender, what is only the ambition of religion, to the public good.

They do not require, as the Author of the Strictures aſſerts, the ſolemn ceremonies, the decorations, the proceſſions, which attend their church, where the Catholic religion is triumphant. They only wiſh to become citizens, in a country, which is fed by their labour, and protected by their numbers. They only wiſh to be admitted to a chance of ſome of the prizes in the ſtate lottery, to which they now contribute, for the privilege of drawing blanks. Preparing for the

the ſtate, the elements of life and health, they only ſolicit in return, a ſhare in the vital principle of their country. They do not deſire to be engrafted on the body politic, for the purpoſe of corrupting it, but for the purpoſe of improving it.

I hope the ſtubborn incredulity of former times is over, and that the profeſſions of Catholics will be no longer ſuſpected of inſincerity. They have given proofs of their loyalty and patriotiſm in times of emergency, when they had heavier grievances to complain of, than at preſent. Is it to be ſuppoſed they will become worſe ſubjects, with more reaſons for being better? and will they love their country leſs, for being admitted into a partnerſhip of the benefits it affords, and the duties it impoſes?

The Proteſtant eſtabliſhment is then the connecting arch between England and Ireland.—England will ſupport it, and Ireland will ſupport it too, if it be not allowed to preſs too lightly on the former, and too heavily on the latter; but the advantage of connection may be purchaſed, on eaſier terms, than the proſcription of three millions of people.

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But does the reſolution warrant the uncandid interpretation that has been given to it? "That "they will endeavour, by all legal and conſtitu- "tional means, to procure the repeal of the laws "by which they are aggrieved as Roman Catho- "lics." *As Roman Catholics.*—Can any words be leſs ambiguous, or more deſcriptive of a parti- cular caſe? Do they not evidently allude to that part of the penal code which ſtill remains in force? That head muſt be muddy, which does not underſtand them; and that heart muſt be corrupt, which is unwilling to underſtand them. If the Author of the Strictures means to inſinu- ate, that the Popery laws cannot be repealed be- cauſe the Proteſtant intereſt muſt be upheld, he is a dangerous friend to the cauſe which he en- deavours to ſupport; for ſuch an inſinuation muſt lead us to conclude, that, ſlavery is to be our lot, *as long* as Proteſtantiſm chooſes to be fear- ful, and that national advantage is to be ſacri- ficed for ever, to the intereſt of a jealous ariſto- cracy.

It is aſked with an air of ſurpriſe, in what ar- ticle a Papiſt is taxed in this country, where a Proteſtant bears not an equal burthen.

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The Author of the Strictures can diſcover, with wonderful ſagacity, the ſpirit of malice and revenge which lurks in the moſt temperate reſolution of a Roman Catholic againſt ſlavery; but he ſees nothing in a penal law, but its firſt operation.

It is true that taxes, in their primary effect, do not fall more heavily on Catholics than on other deſcriptions of ſubjects. But this equality does not long ſubſiſt. The Catholic who pays taxes, is in the ſituation of a man who buys an eſtate under a bad title. His money is, in a great meaſure, loſt for ever: it flows into other channels, to enrich other perſons. Here is action on the one hand, without re-action on the other. A conſiderable proportion of the profits of his labour goes to the ſtate, but he receives nothing, in return, to reward his diligence, or to animate him to new exertions of induſtry. He has no ſhare in the public eſtate; nor can he flatter himſelf with the hope, that he ſhall one day ſee his ſon in poſſeſſion of ſome civil or military employment, ſerving his country, and ſharing its rewards.

We are told, indeed, by the Author of the Strictures, that if we complain of being excluded

ed from the whole executive, legiſlative, and judicial power, we repreſent the Proteſtant eſtabliſhment as a grievance. He ſeems to forget that the moſt ferocious laws againſt Catholics were not paſſed until ſeveral years after the revolution. At this period there were bigots who dreaded popery as a peſtilence; and yet ſuch a ſcheme of proſcription as exiſts at this day was not judged neceſſary for the ſecurity of the Proteſtant church. How, with leſs reaſon for apprehenſion, more proviſions againſt danger are allowed to remain at preſent, muſt be a cauſe of wonder to every reflecting mind.

We are conſoled, indeed, for the reſtrictions under which we labour. We are told that Mr. Troy can inform us that the culture of land is not unprofitable; and that Mr. Byrne and Mr. Roche are very rich men. The poor peaſant, and his hut, little better than the dwelling of a Laplander, never enter into our Author's calculation. It is true that the two laſt mentioned reſpectable gentlemen have acquired conſiderable properties, even in ſpite of reſtriction and monopoly. But hence it only follows, that the penal code, although it be bad, might be worſe. But the effects of the popery laws are to be ſeen in the faces of the half-famiſhed peaſantry of this

this country, who wander through their native land in ſearch of a reſting-place, which they are deſtined not to find; and who are annually turned from their doors, with their wretched families, to make room for a tenantry, capable of anſwering the political views of an ambitious landlord. Something of this kind, I underſtand, was the occaſion of the diſturbances, in a certain county, which has lately been ſo *honourably* diſtinguiſhed by the reſolutions of its grand-jury.

To divert us however from theſe uneaſy ſpeculations, we are adviſed to engage in religious controverſy, (as if we were not ſufficiently puniſhed for the little we know of it already.) And to inſtruct our children in the various branches of literature, although learning with them is to be deprived of its uſual honours and rewards. We are adviſed to ſubdue our avarice, and to look, with little eagerneſs, after the profits of an eſtabliſhment, or the offices or the penſions of government.

Theſe offices and penſions *it ſeems* have *lately* changed their nature. They are not of much importance *now*. They are *quite* caſual and fluctuating. Above all things, they cannot change the condition of a whole people. Without obſerv-

ing that the preſent ſtate of the Iriſh Catholics affords a leſſon that excluſion from the ſtate may produce pernicious conſequences to a very great extent, I ſhould be glad to know whether, a thing may not be good, and very deſirable, although it cannot change the condition of a whole people? How many hundreds of young men, the ſons of Roman Catholics, are compelled to emigrate every year, and to enter into the ſervice of foreign princes, becauſe they are diſqualified, by law, from ſerving in a military capacity, or engaging in any branch of the legal department at home; and it is worthy of obſervation, that, Ireland, at this day, owes her rank among nations, her fame for valour, and for honour, to thoſe men, who are denied the means of ſubſiſtence in their own country. The mind of Ireland is to be found in a colony of refugees. It is in exile that Ireland appears truly great. I have known ſome of thoſe men, whom the rigour of penal laws would neither ſuffer to live at home, in tranquillity, nor abroad in ſecurity. They were a race of heroes. It has been the cuſtom, I know, to claſs them with traitors and rebels; but let it be remembered, that it was outlawry that made them deſerters. Like the Trojan exiles they cheriſhed in a foreign land the remembrance of their native country, which they

they were forced to fly, and purchaſed under foreign banners, for the Iriſh name, that glory which they were not allowed to purchaſe for the Iriſh nation. It is true, that we have ſometimes ſeen them among the number of our enemies; but hoſpitality impoſes duties as well as patriotiſm. They fought for their protectors, and wept over the laurels, which they won from an unnatural parent. Yet this ſyſtem of proſcription, and disfranchiſement is ſtill to be continued, and not only men but virtue is to be expatriated.

But if we complain that ſo many walks in life are ſhut upon us, we are ſent, by the Author of the Strictures, to thoſe which are already full. We are adviſed to become huſbandmen or merchants, without capital perhaps for the one employment, or inclination for the other.

Reſtricted therefore, as we are, in the objects of our purſuits, and cramped even in the means of compaſſing the objects, which preſent themſelves in the narrow range, that is left us, is it ſurpriſing, that "we ſhould look with envy to the "ſubjects of an arbitrary monarch, and contraſt "that government, where one great tyrant ra-"vages the land, with the thouſand inferior deſ-"pots, whom, at every inſtant, we muſt encoun-

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" ter?" And what is the remedy propoſed for theſe hardſhips? It is admitted, by the Author of the Strictures, that we feel like men; but it is recommended to our rulers, not to feel like men, and to counteract the ſentiments of hatred, reſentment, or vengeance, which tyranny *is ſaid* to have generated, by the continuance of that tyranny. We are told that we ſhall be happy, if we never exerciſe our faculties of thought, or view with indifference what paſſes in the ſtate; and that, if we go to the tavern, and drive away our ſenſes, the movements of government will be almoſt imperceptible to us.

Living under an oppreſſive ſyſtem, I am not aſtoniſhed to hear ſuch language. The ſureſt way to debaſe our minds, is to debauch our morals.

It is inſinuated, that if the Roman Catholics be debaſed, or degraded, it is not from the coercion of external power, but from internal impulſe; not from proſcription, but from perjury.

The ſource of ſuch ſentiments muſt be polluted indeed. They muſt come from a man, who has long traded in iniquity; who, in the purſuit of opulence and power, would not be reſtrained by the law of opinion, or the dictates

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of conſcience; and who deſerves the pillory, at leaſt, for his baſeneſs, if he has not already obtained that diſtinction.

I will not agree with this ſlanderer, in his inferences from premiſes, which warrant a very different concluſion. I am far from thinking that morality, even among the lower orders of Catholics, is at ſo low an ebb. If it be, the cauſe of ſuch profligacy is to be found in the preſent ſtate of the country; and this depravity of morals, inſtead of being an argument againſt the repeal of the Popery laws, is an argument in favour of it.

Human character is, in a great meaſure, the work of our own hands. The evil propenſities of the mind may be curbed by removing the temptations which ſeduce us from virtue, and our duty. To multiply oaths is to multiply perjury; and if a bribe be held out to poverty, and beggary, the proſpect of preſent advantage may outweigh the dictates of religion, and morality. If I ſend a man to the woods, I muſt blame myſelf if he return ignorant; and if I train him under a vicious ſyſtem, I muſt expect to find him corrupt. The whole penal code is a corrupting

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ſyſtem. It is Pandora's box, which muſt be deſtroyed in order to find *Hope*.

But the logic of our Author deſerves to be remarked *again* for its ſingularity. Grant, ſays he, the privilege of ſuffrage, and the ignominious traffic will acquire additional vigour; that is, remove the cauſe of the ignominious traffic, which is proſcription, and the effect will be increaſed.

But his obſervations, though not intended for the beſt purpoſe, may prove uſeful. They may ſerve to haſten inquiry, and to diſpoſe a virtuous legiſlature to improve the morals of the people, by diminiſhing the number of temptations to evil and diſgraceful practices.

But internal impulſe, ſays our Author, not the coercion of external power, is the cauſe of the evils which debaſe us. One would imagine from this aſſertion, that the whole code of Popery laws was the work of Roman Catholics.

I admit, that ſelf-evident truths require no elucidation; but paradoxes, I believe, are not entitled to equal privileges.

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The Author of the Strictures, however, ſoars above the rules of vulgar writers—neglects to adduce proofs, where the public have a right to demand them, and exerts no ingenuity where ingenuity would be moſt wanted.

Induſtry, ſays he, is not depreſſed by the Popery laws, becauſe within theſe few years, the national exertions, and the conſequences of theſe exertions, the wealth, and proſperity of the country, have exceeded the hopes of the moſt ſanguine. I beg leave to aſk, whether the repeal, which was, ſome time ago, obtained of ſome of the Popery laws, has not contributed to theſe conſequences? I believe no man will be abſurd enough to deny it. And if the experiment has ſucceeded ſo well already, is not this a reaſon for carrying it ſomewhat farther? Public ſpirit, *it is alledged*, is not enervated by the excluſion of Roman Catholics from political ſituations; becauſe, within a ſhort period, we have liberated our commerce, and unſhackled our legiſlature. I allow that public ſpirit is not entirely deſtroyed by the ſyſtem of monopoly and reſtriction which ſtill prevails, but I know it is much weakened by the exiſtence of ſuch a ſyſtem.—Half the nation is palſied, but the functions of life

life are carried on in the part, which continues ſound; hence, however, it does not follow, that we ſhould have leſs vigour, if we had the uſe of more members.

I rejoice that projects of reform and patriotiſm *are ſaid* to be in agitation; and ſurely they cannot have a more uſeful, or a more ſublime object than to give a people to a country, which has had the magnanimity to aſſert its independence. At preſent, the language of the law is freedom, but the language of the people is ſlavery. We have a palace, which is untenanted, and which, from the ſilence that reigns around it, ſeems rather to be the monument, than the temple of liberty.

The Author of the Strictures continues to refuſe us relief, becauſe the lower and induſtrious orders of Catholics would derive no other advantage from the repeal of the Popery laws, but the privilege of ſuffrage. And is this privilege an advantage of little importance? Has it no other effect than that of engaging men in conteſts, and making them corrupt? Is it not a ſhield for the poor man againſt the perſecution of the rich? Does it not improve the manners of a people, by

encreaſing

encreaſing the points of contact between the higher and the lower orders of ſociety? Does it not ſerve to raiſe the man, whoſe lot it is to be humble, and to ſubdue the inſolence, and pride of him, whom chance has placed in an elevated ſtation? But the Author of the Strictures ſeems to think that the ſyſtems of Nature have no connection, or relation; that the moral has no influence on the phyſical order of things; and that conſtitutional rights, giving energy to the will, the underſtanding, and the paſſions of men, produce no changes in the form, and combination of ſurrounding objects. Will not the poor man mingle his labour more willingly with the ſoil, if he be in poſſeſſion of a freehold? And will not the landlord be more ready to grant a freehold, if the tenant can derive a vote from it? Under the preſent ruinous ſyſtem, the will of the proprietor is the law of the occupier of the ground.

But look to the flouriſhing condition of the Engliſh yeomanry, and there muſt be an end to the argument. It may be ſaid that Engliſh wealth is due to a widely extended commerce; but it was conſtitution that gave commerce, and it is liberty, that fertilizes the ſoil, and converts the barren heath into the cultivated farm.

But the diſcoveries of our Author are not confined to rural economy; they extend to the politics of religion. To ſilence religious diſſentions, he propoſes to give a legal ſanction, and preference to one ſect, to the excluſion of the reſt; that is, to ſatisfy all parties, by giving to one, what all were contending for. He does by ſubtraction, what is generally done by diviſion.

I am far from diſputing the claims of an eſtabliſhment, which has prèſcription and uſage in its favour; but, of all the modes for healing religious animoſity, that of our Author is the moſt liable to objections. Experience has repeatedly informed us, that, nothing ſerves more to inflame the minds of men, who think religion to be an object of value, than preferences and rewards ſet apart for one ſect, and pains and penalties denounced againſt others. Why do we hear of no religious rivalſhips in America? becauſe in that country we find no barriers erected againſt particular forms of worſhip—no ſyſtems of favouritiſm—no ſyſtems of hoſtility.

But according to the Author of the Strictures, the Roman Catholics ſhould be ſatisfied with *unequivocal* toleration. What latitude he chooſes to give, or what limits he chooſes to aſſign to the

the term toleration I know not, but ſurely that kind of liberality is very *equivocal*, which makes civil degradation the price of religious freedom, which toierates a mode of worſhip, and puniſhes thoſe who adopt it.

Catholic governments, however, are brought forward as models for imitation. I fear, our Author has been rather unfortunate in his choice. Does he forget what was done in France and in Poland? Does he forget that, in both countries, civil and religious freedom was ſecured in the moſt unqualified manner to all Chriſtians by one and the ſame act? I will not pretend to juſtify France in all her meaſures, and particularly in what relates to the Non-juring clergy; but let it be remembered that the teſts propoſed, were rather of a political, than a religious nature. To be admitted into the Senate, it was not deemed neceſſary, as a previous ſtep, to abjure his Holineſs of Rome; nor was the candidate's, diſloyalty, or loyalty meaſured by the degrees of his aſſent to, or diſſent from the doctrine of tranſubſtantiation. To perform duties, which are level with our *reaſon*, ſuch as thoſe of a citizen, or a ſenator, it was not judged neceſſary, as a qualification, to abjure what is above *reaſon*.

But this ſyſtem of reſtriction, *ſays the Author of the Strictures*, ariſes from the nature of the conſtitution, as ſettled in 1688, when Proteſtantiſm was made a fundamental principle in church, and ſtate. How an aſſertion, ſo deſtitute of truth, could have been hazarded in a work which was to meet the public eye, I am at a loſs to conceive. Surely that cauſe muſt be weak, that requires the miſrepreſentation, or the concealment of facts to ſupport it.

The Articles of Limerick ſecured to the Roman Catholics of this country, not only religious freedom, but ſeveral civil privileges, and immunities, which *at preſent*, they do not poſſeſs; among others the right of ſuffrage: and it is worthy of obſervation, that, during the reign of William, an act of toleration was paſſed in England, and afterward adopted by the Iriſh parliament.

William, although ſometimes compelled to yield to the neceſſity of the times, in which he lived, was a friend to civil and religious freedom; and, having obſerved the loyal conduct of the Roman Catholics in Holland, under a Proteſtant government, juſtly concluded that the Iriſh Roman Catholics would become dutiful

dutiful ſubjects alſo, if the hand of power ceaſed to haraſs and oppreſs them.

Under this conviction, he frequently endeavoured to mitigate the reſtraints, which bigotry was eager to impoſe on men's conſciences, and to prevent the ferocious manners of his times from being embodied into acts of parliament. But ſome years after his death, religious intolerance had its full operation; and the commencement of the preſent century will be long remembered as the period, which gave birth to that deteſtable ſyſtem of oppreſſion, under which we ſo long groaned. A period from which we may date the fall of all that was ancient, all that was noble in Ireland.

This ſyſtem of oppreſſion was more dreadful than all the inſtruments of cruelty which deſpotiſm had been contriving, for a ſeries of ages. It graſped more ruin in one day than an hundred battles could have produced. It paſſed ſentence of death on a whole people. It withered the nerves of public hope, and threw Ireland from her rank among nations. It was not only fatal to contemporary generations, but like original ſin, polluted millions yet unborn. It not only deſtroyed virtue, but prevented its regeneration.

Yet,

Yet, upon inquiry, we ſhall find, to the aſtoniſhment of all who are ready to feel for human calamity, that this digeſt of barbarity was the effect not of terror, but of jealouſy and revenge, not of proviſionary caution, but of political artifice.

Among a variety of inſtances, which might be adduced, it will be ſufficient to mention one. A clauſe of a bill againſt Popery enacted, that all Popiſh eſtates ſhould be divided equally among Roman Catholic children, unleſs the perſons to whom they were to deſcend, ſhould qualify by taking the uſual oaths of abjuration and ſupremacy. The Engliſh miniſtry, at that day, were confounded on ſeeing the bill. To paſs it would be an act of great ſeverity, but to reject it would be dangerous. It was determined, therefore, to defeat the bill, by making it unpalatable to the Diſſenters, whoſe influence in the Iriſh Houſe of Commons was very conſiderable. A clauſe was therefore added, by which, all perſons in Ireland were excluded from employments under the crown, and the magiſtracy in cities, unleſs ſuch perſons ſhould qualify by taking the ſacrament, according to the forms of the Church of England.

Such,

Such, however, was the deep-rooted averſion to Popery, that the bill, with its additional ſeverities, was paſſed into a law, by a conſiderable majority. Is there a generous mind that can recollect ſuch a tranſaction, without horror, and amazement? And yet a law which invaded domeſtic happineſs, which broke the ſlumbers of the aged parent, and rewarded filial ingratitude and profligacy, was ſuffered to remain in force, at leaſt ſeventy years, to the diſgrace of the Iriſh name, and the ruin of many old and reſpectable families.

We have at length reached a period of more mildneſs and liberality. We have nearly outlived our prejudices and animoſities. We have learnt the impiety of ſtepping in between man and his Creator; but the ſpirit of our manners has not yet completely paſſed into our laws; and while a trace of the penal ſyſtem is to be found on the ſtatute book, we are but Goths in the 18th century.

But is the ſtability of the Proteſtant eſtabliſhment more precarious at this day, than it was at the concluſion of the Iriſh war? The queſtion hardly deſerves a ſerious anſwer. It is no longer a new eſtabliſhment. Preſcription has given it roots, which

which it would be dangerous, if not impoſſible to pull up. No one living remembers an older eſtabliſhment in this country; and men are apt to bear, without murmur, that eminence, or ſuperiority, which they have been accuſtomed to look up to from their infancy.

Under theſe circumſtances, is it not abſurd to exhibit extraordinary ſymptoms of terror, and diſmay; and to employ more proviſionary caution than was deemed neceſſary even in the hour of alarm? What idea would we form of a miniſter, who, in times of profound peace, would call upon his country to make preparations for war? And yet it is univerſally known, that the Roman Catholics, for ſeveral years after the concluſion of the Iriſh war, were left in poſſeſſion of many civil privileges and immunities, which are denied them at this day; and if more power, lodged in Catholic hands, was conſiſtent, about a century ago, with the exiſtence of an eſtabliſhment which had then much to fear from foreign invaſion, and domeſtic diſcontent, is it not ridiculous to aſſert, *with the Author of the Strictures*, at a time when every danger to the Proteſtant ſucceſſion is removed, and conſequently when Proteſtant eſtabliſhments have every ſecurity that human inſtitutions can have,

have, that if the power, which now *juſt* ſupports the Proteſtant communion, were leſſened, every thing would fall into the Catholic ſcale.

But from the ſpirit of the publications which are daily to be met with, it would be natural to infer, that it is the buſineſs of empire to perpetuate religious hoſtility; and that miniſters of ſtate are ſent into this country, not to watch over national proſperity, but to preach the goſpel; and to preach it, not with the meekneſs of Apoſtles, but the fury of military invaders. And as a corollary from this ſpirit, it has been the cuſtom to repreſent Roman Cotholics, as dull domeſtic animals, formed to ſweat and toil for the convenience of animals of a ſuperior nature; and condemned to an eternal excluſion from thoſe bleſſings which nature has plentifully ſcattered in the walks of human life.

I am far from thinking, that Governments ſhould take no part in what relates to the morals of a people; but religion requires to be managed with much caution, and great delicacy. Whenever it has beed prophaned by the hand of man, whenever it has been taken from its proper place, the ſanctuary of a virtuous heart, and converted into an engine of power, it has diſcovered itſelf

to be in the moral, what an earthquake is known to be in the phyſical world.

It is to the practical part of life, that Governments ſhould direct their attention. When they interfere with the opinions of men, they invade the province of poets, of ſatiriſts, and ſpeculative philoſophers. They hold themſelves up to ridicule, when they attempt to do by laws, what muſt be left to manners.

But, ſays the Author of the Strictures, neither profeſſions, nor promiſes, nor oaths, can change the nature of man, nor eradicate from his breaſt, his native love of power; but what cannot be entirely changed, may be very much amended; what cannot be eradicated, may be much weakened; and if it be the meaning of our Author, that neither compacts, nor oaths impoſe any reſtraint on thoſe inſtincts, which urge men to ſeek power and dominion, I am at a loſs to know where he found this ſyſtem of morality. It may be his ſyſtem; but I know it is not the ſyſtem of human nature in general. I will not join in a libel on the law of nations, on courts of law, and parliament, on all the public bodies of the kingdom.

But if compacts be weak, and insignificant barriers against ambition and immorality, and if Catholics cannot divest themselves of an aversion to establishments, which are not Catholic, is not superiority of numbers a difficulty, which the few cannot overcome, even if the strength of both parties were equally disciplined, and organized? It is true, that the Roman Catholics form the great mass of the people of Ireland; and it is from this narrow view of things, that most of the arguments have been deduced in favour of restriction. But is England out of the question? Is Ireland an insulated country in politics, as well as in natural situation? Independent in matters of legislation, and in the administration of domestic justice, is she not united to the empire by a common head? and will not the weight of England, added to the Protestant scale in Ireland, give a manifest and unceasing preponderancy to Irish Protestants. Under such circumstances of superiority, both in point of numbers and power, I think it is unnecessary to call in tyranny as an auxiliary.

But some of us have been accused of availing ourselves of a wild democratical spirit, which is pervading Europe, of associating with factious clubs, and speculating on a revolution. This

charge makes part of a ſyſtem of contumely, to which we have been long accuſtomed. To entitle us in the minds of ſome men to the appellation of dutiful ſubjects, it was required, as an indiſpenſable qualification, that we ſhould have fortitude on the one hand, and inſenſibility on the other. Fortitude enough to bear whatever ſeverities were impoſed on us, and inſenſibility enough not to complain of them. It was a queſtion in politics, how far political power might extend its prerogatives over human nature; and we were, very properly, reſerved as ſubjects for the experiment. Active qualities on our part might have diſturbed the operators plan; and, therefore, it was very judiciouſly inſiſted, as a preliminary condition, that we ſhould ſuſpend the uſual functions of ſenſe and motion, and that we ſhould retain no faculty but the *vis inertiæ*. I hope, however, that at length we may venture to aſk, whether the experiment be nearly over, for it has been very tedious? Given over in the laſt century, to the perſecution of manners, and condemned in this to be the ſubject-matter of a law experiment, may we venture at length to reſume the native faculties of the mind? May we claim the privileges of ſenſation and ſpeech, if thoſe of ſociety are to be denied to us. Theſe privileges of ſenſation and ſpeech we never diſhonoured; we never

were

were ungrateful, and we never ſpoke the language of rebellion. If we ſolicit thoſe rights, which other people claim as an inheritance, we wiſh to obtain them through the organs of the ſtate. We do not call for the aſſiſtance of the giddy, and the factious; but we call for the aſſiſtance of all thoſe who are wiſe, and all thoſe who are honeſt. Without ſpeculating on a revolution we confine our views and wiſhes to reformation. Without going in purſuit of ſyſtems of untried, and theoretical good, we only deſire to get out of evil; and if we call upon any popular ſpirit to aid our exertions, it is the ſpirit of peace and juſtice; that ſpirit of philanthropy which has reformed legiſlators without convulſing empires, which has diſpelled the miſts of intolerance, and which has made religion more amiable, by making it milder. We rely with confidence on the virtues of our Sovereign, and the liberality of parliament; and to theſe guardians of a people's welfare do we commit our own hopes, and thoſe of our poſterity.

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